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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001263

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REACT TO PRESIDENT'S  
SPEECH

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Jordanian government officials and members of parliament lauded the tone and content of the President's speech during a lunchtime viewing and discussion at the DCM's residence. Contacts were laudatory of the speech's frankness and sense of balance. While noting the speech's broader themes, the group focused on its implications for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Many were pleasantly surprised with the directness and even-handedness on the issue. A debate on America's role in bringing about a solution ended with agreement that concrete actions were needed on both sides, and that the U.S. has a role in bringing them about. End Summary.

Spanning the "Expectation Gap"  
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12. (C) Contacts clearly had high expectations for the speech. A member of parliament noted, however, that all such addresses by American presidents suffered from an "expectation gap" in the Arab world. In the end, only one out of twelve contacts told us that he came away partly disappointed by the speech. All the others painted it as well delivered, tightly composed, and pithy in its content. They noted that it exceeded their expectations.

Clear and Balanced  
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13. (C) Contacts uniformly appreciated the frank and honest tone of the President's speech. An academic called it "comprehensive, balanced, and enlightening," and noted that the President spoke as an educator rather than as a head of state -- a role that allowed him to be more candid. A member of parliament commented that the speech added the necessary context to clarify American policy towards the Muslim world. Another mentioned that the speech marked a "frankness we haven't heard before." Several contacts remarked favorably on the speech's many appeals to universal values that reach beyond the Muslim world, and noted that they helped to lend increased credibility to the messages it carried.

Israel/Palestine  
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14. (C) Before the speech began, contacts were wary of the tone it would strike on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Afterwards, many were pleasantly surprised at the direct talk of obligations for both sides, but wondered about next steps. A Foreign Ministry official said that the speech demonstrated the President's "total commitment" to engaging on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A third-country diplomat argued that the President did not talk about his personal engagement on the issue. On the Arab Peace Initiative, contacts seemed open to the President's notion that it represented a beginning in discussions rather than an end.

15. (C) The speech sparked a significant debate on the role America can and should play in the negotiations. A member of parliament remarked that "the U.S. should not impose peace, but it should push peace." A third country diplomat countered that American unwillingness to impose a solution means that progress will be elusive. Many of our contacts referred to the "historic" nature of the speech, but the unanimous judgment was that its importance would ultimately be measured by its ability to spark concrete changes to the policies of Israel and the lives of ordinary Palestinians.  
Beecroft